Michigan *Community for a Lifetime*

Elder Friendly Community Recognition Program
History and Project Development Report

Developed for the Michigan Commission on Services to the Aging

By:
State Advisory Council on Aging
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Michigan *Community for a Lifetime*

Imagine a state in which all communities are "Elder Friendly".

Being "Elder Friendly" means the community has a set of assets in place that have been shown to improve the lives of Michigan seniors. Individuals, families, groups, institutions and organizations are engaged proactively in developing and maintaining those assets. (Michigan Vital Aging Think Tank, 2005)

In 2004, the State Advisory Council on Aging held discussions on "elder friendly" communities. In their Annual Report they concluded that there are characteristics of communities that make a community more "livable" or manageable for residents. The six interdependent characteristics they identified in 2004 and a seventh they added in 2005 that create an "elder friendly" community are:

Walkability
Supportive community systems
Access to health care
Safety and security
Housing
Transportation
Health promotion/disease prevention programs (2005)

SENIOR FRIENDLINES
"Perhaps more than anything, senior friendliness is an attitude – based on respect for all community members' contributions and the right to enjoy the fruits of community life, no matter what their ages, stage of life, or level of activity."
(National Advisory Council on Aging. 1999)[1]

They also recognized the importance of shifting the focal point "from an illness to wellness perspective."

In the report's action steps the Council recommends:
- Becoming more involved in the Michigan Cool Cities Initiative
- Creating an "information czar" to collect and disseminate information on "elder friendly" community initiatives in Michigan
- Creating a toolkit to share with local communities that will help them implement local projects
- Developing new partnerships to promote the report's objectives
- Initiating a statewide recognition/award program to support the creation of "elder friendly" communities.

This paper summarizes how the Michigan Vital Aging Think Tank with support from Michigan State University Extension, the State Advisory Council on Aging, the Office of Services to the Aging, the Michigan Department of Community Health, and partners from around the state, developed a program to accomplish those action steps.

Michigan *Community for a Lifetime:* Documenting the Need

The Michigan Vital Aging Think Tank is a broad, collaborative partnership that has been working to develop projects to help Michigan communities be more "Elder Friendly". In 2004, the Think Tank began their work on creating this program called the "Michigan Community for a Lifetime Program." [3]

Why is it needed?
Between 2000 and 2030 the percentage of the Michigan population age 65 and older will increase from 12.3% to 19.5% of the total. [6]

In real numbers, that means an increase of more than 850,000 people age 65 and over. Currently there are about 1,280,725. In 2030 projections indicate there will be 2,080,725 people age 65 and over. That growth presents real challenges and opportunities for the communities of Michigan.

The majority of these Michiganians will stay in their own homes and communities as they age. [7] Despite perceptions, people aged 65-85 are the least likely of any age group to move. While there is often a tendency to focus on the segment of the age 65 and over population that is frail, [8] that segment is generally equated to only 20% of the population.

Communities must prepare for the health care, housing, transportation and other needs of the frail seniors. However, while there will be an increase of about 170,000 people with enhanced needs, there will also be an increase of over 680,000 people who are vital, independent older residents who can be a source of civic, social and financial capital. They can serve as volunteers and activists, board members and elected officials, funders and community leaders.

Local communities face challenges and opportunities in creating physical and social environments that are elder friendly for both the frail and the vital populations. [9]

Why would a community want to be "elder friendly"?
- Older adults remain engaged in community life longer and as a result contribute to community life longer
- Older adults will be healthier, reducing the demands on and costs of local health care
- The community will attract residents – of all ages – who will contribute to community vitality
- The community will attract resources – businesses, infrastructure, other – to meet the needs of its older adult members
- Becoming a Community for a Lifetime will build community capacity by developing leadership, relationships and knowledge that will be useful in creating community change in other areas

As the project unfolded there were several models that provided the foundation for us.

The City of Calgary Elder Friendly Communities Project was established in January 2000. It used a community development approach with significant citizen participation to develop an assessment. The categories they identified in their research included several that the State Advisory Council on Aging had not named – we called them enrichment and inclusion. (1)

Cuyahoga County (Cleveland) Ohio created an Elder Friendly Community Task Force that produced a "Guide To Elder Friendly Community Building" in June 2004. The guide includes both recommendations for a community process for assessing a community and an assessment tool. They broke their indicators into three categories: Home Life Indicators, Mobility Indicators, and Community Life Indicators. That helped us to assess our list in new ways. (2)

The AARP "Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide" added the focus on "Commerce" to our assessment. Produced in cooperation with Cornell University, this guide includes many examples of programs and practices around the country that support liveable communities. You will find that items throughout the Michigan Assessment that are based on this guide are identified. Should your community be interested in pursuing the sections included in the AARP assessment in more detail you'll find that you have already completed significant portions of it. (3)

Florida adopted a statewide initiative "Communities for a Lifetime" to assist Florida communities in becoming better places to live with a focus on seniors, but inclusive of all residents. The work in Florida reinforced the selection of the now nine categories of indicators in the Michigan Assessment. (4)We looked within Michigan to add detail to the sections of the assessment on physical activity. The Governor's Council on Physical Fitness Health and Sports and Michigan Department of Community Health's Promoting Active Communities (PAC) assessment provided a great deal of detail to sections on walkability and enrichment. We have also identified questions within our assessment that are included in or based on the PAC assessment. We would encourage communities interested in further developing these sections or participating in the Promoting Active Communities recognition program to seek more information on this process. (5)We also looked to some local community projects in Michigan. **The** *Community for a Lifetime* **Elder Friendly Community Recognition process is not intended to compete with existing efforts or supplant them – rather, it should enhance them, providing an opportunity for communities to gain recognition for what they are doing.**

Michigan *Community for a Lifetime:* Project History

Grand Rapids "Creating Community for a Lifetime" project was launched in May 2004 by the Area Agency on Aging of West Michigan and Grand Rapids Community Foundation. At its foundation is a nationally available assessment process called the AdvantAge Initiative. Grand Rapids used a survey tool provided by the AdvantAge Institute to assess aging in Kent County. Among other things the Grand Rapids project emphasized for us the importance of taking an asset based or "successful aging" approach to the *Community for a Lifetime* project. Based on a ten-year Study of Aging in America by the MacArthur Foundation it was noted that we tend to have "a persistent preoccupation with disability, disease, and chronological age, rather than with the positive aspects of aging" (Rowe and Kahn, page xi). The MacArthur Study identifies three key components of successful aging: Low risk of disease and disease-related disability; high mental and physical function; and, active engagement with life. The combination of all three components is what makes successful aging. This study provides Kent County, and us, with the research-based underpinnings for taking an asset-based approach to planning for an aging population. (6)

Battle Creek's Burnham Brook joined a national initiative sponsored by *Partners for Livable Communities* and the *National Association of Area Agencies on Aging* called "Aging in Place." Aging in Place promotes the broad range of programs and services needed to assist older adults as they age in place, including issues related to community planning, housing, transportation, public safety, education/life long learning, workforce development, and retirement planning. The Aging in Place materials provided another touch point as we developed the Michigan Application.

Drawing on these and other resources we moved forward with the development of the Michigan Community For a Lifetime Assessment. It incorporates sections on the six elder friendly characteristics the State Advisory Council on Aging originally recommended in 2004 but not specifically on their "Health promoting/disease prevention" recommendation made later in 2005. It includes ten categories of assets/livability that play a significant role in creating a *Community for a Lifetime*:

    Walkability/Bikeability
    Supportive community systems
    Access to Health Care
    Safety and Security
    Housing: Availability and Affordability
    Housing: Modification and Maintenance
    Transportation
    Commerce
    Enrichment
    Inclusion

The assessment is not intended to ask every possible question about a subject. Rather, it includes key questions that will help stimulate community discussion and information gathering.

Once the first draft of the assessment was complete, Otsego County agreed to be the pilot test site for implementation in 2005-2006. Special thanks to Dona Wishart, Phil Alexander, and Linda Cronk for their leadership and to all the community members who contributed to the project. The Otsego County Elder Friendly Community Team members were excellent testers. As they worked on the assessment and application materials they brought numerous ideas forward for consideration by the development team. The result was a greatly improved product. Midway through the Otsego County process, north Ottawa County agreed to try another implementation method. Thanks to Jinnifer Gibbs and Gail Ringelberg for organizing that process. While Otsego County recruited various people from leadership positions throughout the community to serve on their team, north Ottawa County recruited teams of seniors. Other leadership options are being and will be tried as well. In 2006, Ionia County began initiating an assessment with a team of county health care leaders. Also in 2006, Bay County began to try to involve their youth leadership teams in completing an assessment. In each case the assessment tool has proven to be an excellent map for the communities to follow.

These communities have been using the Community For A Lifetime assessment tool. They conducted a community assessment by going through the questions in the assessment. Even if a given community group chooses a different assessment to use, it can utilize the Community For A Lifetime Assessment sections and questions not covered in their assessment to supplement and enhance their assessment and planning efforts.

In addition to the assessment, several other documents were completed. Web resources were identified for each section that provide additional insight and information into the many specific subjects in the section. So, for example, when you have a question in the application about universal design for homebuilding and you want to learn more about it – there is a place to turn. There are also guides for translating the assessment responses into an action plan.

The original project planned and developed award criteria that recognized a basic set of assets that any community must have to be considered a *Community for a Lifetime.* Several additional assets were also identified as contributing to making a community elder friendly. A scoring key was then developed reflecting the presence of increasing percentages of these required and additional assets in the assessment as warranting consideration for a certification award at four different levels. At one point we had also assigned points to the various answers on the assessment but we learned that it could result in too much confusion. We have since recognized that while we can intuitively state, we cannot yet "guarantee", that a community that

has the assets provides a better life for older adults. Since certification is associated with a guarantee we made the recommendation that we call this an award instead.

After further review with the Michigan Office of Services to the Aging, it also became apparent that resources would not be sufficient to operate a certification award program as originally envisioned. It was decided that it would be more practical and inclusive to establish a recognition program to encourage broad participation across the state. Consequently, the certification levels were not adopted for the Community for a Lifetime process.

Like the quality improvement process, communities need to identify their assets and challenges as the first step. Beyond that, flexibility was built in by allowing communities to receive recognition based on their improvements/accomplishment rather than on any specific set of assets. It is Michigan's goal that communities can be recognized for their ability to assess and improve community attributes for a more livable community. This program's application is effective for the many different characteristics of communities around Michigan. No adjustments were made in the assessment or application based on community size. However, the flexibility of the application process adopted in 2007 makes it possible for any community to receive *Community for a Lifetime* recognition.

The Name

Initially, it was proposed that we create a recognition process for "Elder Friendly Communities". However, as the project evolved concern was expressed from a variety of sources over the use of that name. As a result we began testing optional names beginning in the fall of 2005. In every test *Community for a Lifetime* was identified as the most desirable name.

The idea for the name *Community for a Lifetime* was not original though. It is the name of a statewide initiative of the Department of Elder Affairs in Florida. In order to use the name *Community for a Lifetime* it was only appropriate to seek the permission of the State of Florida. On July 19, 2006 we received a letter signed by Carole Green, Secretary of the Department of Elder Affairs. In part the letter said:

> "We are honored that you consider the state of Florida to be a model in ensuring that its seniors are able to age in place for a lifetime and are asking to adopt the name "*Communities for a Lifetime*" for your state.

The Department of Elder Affairs developed all materials used and distributed by our agency related to *Communities for a Lifetime*, and it contains no terms or logos that are subject to intellectual property rights. Therefore you are free to use the materials and terms related to the

initiative. In addition, we would welcome the opportunity to share our experiences and knowledge with you. "Based on that letter and the support we identified for the name we recommended that Michigan adopt *Community for a Lifetime* for their recognition process.

List of accomplishments-to-date:

Products:
- *Community for a Lifetime* award criteria recommendations
- *Community for a Lifetime* assessment
- *Community for a Lifetime* community action planning tool guide
- *Community for a Lifetime* community action planning worksheet
- *Community for a Lifetime* worksheet for combining community action plans
- *Community for a Lifetime* bibliography
- *Community for a Lifetime* links and resources
- *Community for a Lifetime* name

Presentations:
- Michigan State Advisory Council on Aging, Lansing, MI, January 2005
- Rural Partners of Michigan Conference, Thompsonville, MI, April, 2005
- Blue Cross Blue Shield Senior Advisory Council, Detroit, MI, June 2005
- Michigan Cool Cities Leadership Group, Lansing, MI, August 2005
- Tri-County Office on Aging Senior Advisory Committee, Lansing, MI, August 2005
- Michigan State Advisory Council on Aging, Lansing, MI, October 2005
- Michigan State Advisory Council on Aging, Lansing, MI, February 2006
- Healthcare Symposium and Health Fair, Hannah Center, East Lansing, April 2006
- Aging Populations in Rural Communities for the Michigan Municipal League, Region 7 Symposium in Sault Ste. Marie, June 2006

Miscellaneous:
- Completed a bibliography on elder friendly community assessment processes.
- November 29, 2005 Michigan Elder Friendly Communities State Assembly. Hosted over 150 people from diverse organizations across Michigan for a day of networking and information sharing about elder friendly work. Highlight was Dr. Jackie Sieppert, University of Calgary, talking about their Calgary Elder Friendly Communities project has been operating since 2001. Other presenters included representatives of Battle Creek Aging in Place project, Grand Rapids Creating Community for a Lifetime Project, Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce Senior Sensitive Marketplace project, Supportive Communities of Detroit, and the Detroit Radio Information Service.

- Completed initial review of application with help from Otsego County Elder Friendly Community Leadership Team. Made modifications and secured graphic design services to make the application user friendly.
- Exhibited at the 2005 Michigan Cool Cities Conference "The Art of Cool". Engaged participants in game activity to identify optional names for Elder Friendly Communities. The top choice was the name Florida uses "Communities for a Lifetime". The Cool Cities leadership has decided to add a reference to Elder Friendly Communities to their 2006 promotional materials.
    - Secured 2005 Community Leadership Development Grant from MSUE LeadNet for developing Elder Friendly Community Leadership Team in Otsego County. Secured 2006 Community Leadership Development Grant for developing team in north Ottawa County. Otsego team is a traditional leadership team with representation from key community representatives: e.g. government, the chamber of commerce, the hospital, law enforcement,
- New Partnerships were formed with:
    - MSU School of Social Work
    - Wayne State University, Institute of Gerontology
    - A.I.M. – Aging Institute of Michigan
    - Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce
- Received consultation from Dr. Jackie Sieppert with review and recommendations on the Michigan Certified Elder Friendly Communities Program
- Established the Michigan Elder Friendly Communities listserv

Michigan Community for a Lifetime

A project of the Michigan Commission on Services to the Aging

The number of seniors in Michigan is increasing… and that's a good thing! Over the next fifteen years there will be a 41% increase in the number of residents age 65 and over. That's 500,000 additional people age 65 and over by the year 2020.

The majority of these seniors will be vital, independent residents who can be a source of civic, social and financial capital. They can serve as volunteers and activists, board members and elected officials, funders and community leaders. But communities must make a commitment to "ease the way" for this population group.

The Michigan *Community for a Lifetime* project will help communities achieve that goal.

A Michigan *Community for a Lifetime* is organized and working hard to improve the lives of our state' seniors. Throughout Michigan, communities are undertaking organized efforts to become more attractive to older residents and to be prepared to provide the services that older residents want and need. Communities engage individuals, families, groups, institutions and organizations in those efforts.

The Michigan Commission on Services to the Aging is creating a mechanism for recognizing this community effort. Communities can apply for recognition by completing an application that captures the outcomes of their effort.

Tools are available to assist communities in achieving success.

- Materials are available that help communities get organized, complete an assessment, develop an action plan, take action, and evaluate results.
- Information on facilitating community processes to assess how the community stands against the certification criteria is available.
- Information about how other communities are filling various needs is collected and available for sharing.

Why become a *Community for a Lifetime*?

Seniors spend their money locally increasing jobs based on their demand for goods and services often attracting restaurants, medical clinics, and home and car repair services

- Seniors can stabilize the business cycle because their income is usually not cyclical
- Seniors enhance the local tax base and increase the local capital pool with their investments

- Seniors provide an experienced pool of talent and committed volunteers
- Being recognized as a *Community for a Lifetime* provides an excellent marketing tool for promoting your community as a great place to live at any age

What makes a *Community for a Lifetime*?

- Walkability/Bikeability: It is easy to get around on foot or by bike.
- Housing: Availability and affordability - There is affordable housing matching a variety of lifestyle needs for seniors. Modification and Maintenance – Resources are available to help keep up on maintenance or make needed structural changes.
- Supportive Community Systems: The community has good cell phone service, high speed internet, and multi-channel television. Services are located near populations and needed services are readily available. Seniors are considered when community decisions are made.
- Safety and security: There is a high level of personal safety in the community.
- Access to Health Care: Seniors can be confident they can meet their medical needs now and in the future.
- Enrichment: Opportunities for seniors to keep learning new things are available.
- Commerce: Businesses and services are available that meet senior needs.
- Public Transportation: It is easy to get around in the community and planes, trains and buses are readily accessible for traveling out-of-town.
- Inclusion: Community members and leaders recognize the value of seniors in the community and treat them respectfully and appreciatively.

What are the steps to receiving *Community for a Lifetime recognition*?

SEE:
Michigan Community for a Lifetime Application
for Elder Friendly Community Recognition Program

This report developed by

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(2) "Guide To Elder-friendly Community Building", Successful Aging Initiative, Cuyahoga County Planning Commission in partnership with The Cleveland Foundation

(3) "Livable Communities: An Evaluation Guide", AARP, by Patricia Baron Pollak, Cornell University, 1999.

(4) "Communities for a Lifetime: Blueprint." Department of Elder Affairs, State of Florida. March 2004.

(5) http://www.michiganfitness.org/active/   Active Community Environments are places where people are able, comfortable and inspired to use their feet to get them places. Michigan Fitness Foundation, Okemos, Michigan, September 2006.

(6) "Creating Community for a Lifetime. Planning for an Elder-Friendly Community in Kent County. Phase I Report." Area Agency of Aging of West Michigan, Grand Rapids Community Foundation, October 2004

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http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/about/index.htm

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http://www.lgc.org/freepub/PDF/Land_Use/fact_sheets/neighborhood_planning.pdf

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http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpa/physical/trails.htm

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http://www.walkinginfo.org/pdf/r&d/crosswalk_021302.pdf

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Walkability Plan for the City of Houghton, *http://www.admin.mtu.edu/pcecc/pdfs/houghton_walkability.pdf*

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Supportive Community Systems

America's Most Livable Communities. http://www.mostlivable.org

Partners for Livable Communities. http://www.livable.com/

Health

Health Compass, Helping seniors more effectively find and use health information on the Internet. http://www.healthcompass.org/

Seniors have special dental needs. http://www.agd.org/consumer/topics/seniors/elderly.asp

Steps to Healthier Aging. http://www.aoa.gov/youcan/about/about.asp

The Advantage Initiative. http://www.vnsny.org/advantage/

Michigan *Community for a Lifetime*: Links & Resources

Safety and Security

Guide to fighting fraud against seniors. (Minnesota)
http://www.ag.state.mn.us/consumer/seniors/Seniors_GFF.htm

Healthy aging. (Colorado) http://www.ext.colostate.edu/pubs/columnha/hamenu.html

National Senior Citizen Law Center. http://www.nsclc.org/

Housing: Availability and Affordability

American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging. http://www.aahsa.org/

American Planning Association. http://www.planning.org/

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http://www.design.ncsu.edu:8120/cud/

New approaches to long term care. http://www.edenalt.com

Using Smart Growth Principles. http://www.smartgrowth.org

Housing: Modification and Maintenance

National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification.
http://www.usc.edu/dept/gero/nrcshhm/directory/mi.htm#top

Commerce

An assessment program for elder friendly retail businesses. www.elderfriendly.com

Training and employment services for mature workers. http://www.experienceworks.org/

Enrichment

A multi-faith e-community designed to help meet religious and spiritual needs.
http://www.beliefnet.com

National Center for Creative Aging - http://www.creativeaging.or